

The Orchid Society Of WA (Inc)

Soft Cane Dendrobiums

(den-DROH-bee-um)

Soft cane dendrobiums have become very popular with growers for ease of growing. With developments of new hybrids over the years, soft cane dendrobiums in a wide range of colours are now available and are truly a magnificent display with many flowers.

POSITION

Soft canes dendrobiums enjoy a light and airy situation and do best when suspended from the roof of a shade house. Best flowering results are obtained from maximum exposure to light during autumn and winter.

TEMPERATURE

Most soft canes will grow at temperatures from 8-9 °C to 40 °C, so they are quite tolerant of temperature changes.

LIGHT

Soft-cane dendrobiums require more light than many other orchids. During the main growing season (November to April) the plants need 20-50% shade. Give them as much light as they can tolerate without burning, to produce strong canes that will flower profusely in the winter to spring period.

WATERING

Soft-cane dendrobiums should be watered regularly and frequently during the periods when new growths are developing (November to April), but reduce the watering after this period, as regular watering will result in the plant producing keikis (baby plants) instead of flowers. Allow the plants to become moderately dry between watering.

FERTILIZING

Fertilise heavily during the spring and summer period, using a complete fertiliser with high nitrogen content at full strength once every second watering. Change the composition of the fertiliser to one that is high in potassium and phosphorus for the rest of the year.

FLOWERING

Soft cane dendrobiums need a cooling off to initiate flower buds—a month of nights at about 10 -13 °C is needed for good results. If plants are placed in a position where good light reaches the full length of the flowering cane at bud initiation time, you will find that flower buds develop over a greater length. If plants are crowded together at that time, flowering will be confined to the top sections of the canes.

POTTING

Soft-cane dendrobiums grow and flower best in relatively small plastic pots, seldom needing pots larger than 100-140 mm in diameter. Because flowering plants can grow quite tall, these pots topple easily unless a bottom layer of large river pebbles is used when repotting. Pine bark (5-10 mm) is the most commonly used potting medium. There is no need to repot just because some roots begin to roam free, but it will become necessary when the plant grows over the edge of the pot so far that it becomes unstable.

DIVIDING

Only divide when the pot has become too big to handle.

NB: These suggestions have been made without prejudice as a guide and no guarantees can be given with regard to successful growing.